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A Holbourn

LETTER
TO AN
INHABITANT
Of the PARISH of
St. Andrew's Holbourn,
ABOUT
New Ceremonies
IN THE
CHURCH.

L O N D O N ,

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43

A

LETTER

TO AN
INHABITANT
Of the PARISH of
St. ANDREW's Holbourn, &c.

SIR,

UPON your being with Me, the other Night, and telling Me that the Curate of your Parish had told the People, in some of his Discourses from the Pulpit, that They must needs STAND UP at the Reading of the *Second Lesson* when taken out of the Gospels, and also at

the Singing of the Psalms, with other Odnesses, and desiring me to give you my Opinion of these matters; I set my self, when you were gone, to consider them very seriously: And I have done it in such a Manner and Method, as will not only shew you my Opinion, and the Grounds of it, but may be useful to other Purposes.

I confess that neither the Man, nor the Gesture it self, considered singly, is worth the taking any pains about. But the Spirit of Imposing is both Troublesome and Mischievous, and ought to be carefully watched against by all Men. Even Governours themselves must always have Regard, in all their Orders and Injunctions, to what is Useful, Edifying, and in some degree necessary: And They who are the Wiest and the Best will ever take the greatest Care they can, to make their Laws and Rules such as shall be the most easily complied withal by plain and honest People, as they will certainly find the

most Content in such Obedience? But that *Private Men*, without Authority, should impose their particular Fancies, upon their Equals, is so far from being to be Justified, that it ought not to be Endured.

1. Of all the *Episcopal Churches* in the World, antient and modern, of whose *Liturgies* we have any certain Knowledge, the *Church of England*, by Law established, retains and uses the *fewest Rites and Ceremonies*, in her Forms of Publick Worship.

2. She might have used and retained more had She thought fit: For she owns in Her 34th Article, that *Every Particular, or National Church, may ordain, change, and abolish Ceremonies or Rites, ordained only by Man's Authority, so that all things be done to edifying.*

3. But

3. But of this *Edifying* She does not allow or make any *Bishop*, *Parson* or *Curate*, to be the Judge, but has tied them down to certain *Rules*, which are (without some plain and urgent Reason to the contrary) to be observed by all in general who *Officiate*.

4. These *Rules* are all contained in the *Rubrics* of the Common Prayer, which are also now confirmed by the *Laws of the Land*.

5. Whosoever observes the *Rules* prescribed in the *Rubric*, in reading the Publick Offices, does as much as he is required to do, either by the *Church*, or by the *Law*; Whosoever does *less* is an *Offender*; whosoever does *more* is an *Innovator*, and does it without Authority, and is fitter to be *punished* than *followed*, and breaks the Unity of the Church in point of *Ceremony*,

ceremony, preferring his own Opinion
to the Judgment of the Church.

6. If the *Laity* conform to the Rites and Ceremonies prescribed in the *Rubrics*, they also do as much as is required of them.

7. All the Ceremonies required of the *Laity*, are *Kneeling* at their Prayers, and *Standing up* at the *Creed*, or Confession of their Faith : They who do this, do all that the Church requires.

8. No Clergyman has Authority to tell the People they must do *more* than the Church requires, which speaks by her *Rubrics*.

9. Altho' the Church allows, *in fact and practice*, more Ceremonies than are required by the *Rubric*; yet is the *Rubric* still the *Rule* and *Law* both to the *Governours* and the *Governed*. The first can neither command

mand nor appoint more; the latter are obliged to no more than the *Rubric* enjoyns.

10. Whosoever therefore tells the People that it is their Duty to stand up or to kneel, where the Church requires it not, tells them in effect, that he is *Wiser* than the Church, and knows what is better for them, than their Governours did, or do, who have it seems omitted and neglected to tell the People their *Duty*.

11. The Ceremonies allowed in Practice by the Church, tho' not enjoyned by the *Rubric*, were such as were in use in the Church, before and when the *Rubrics* were made; and being found reasonable, and easy, and becoming, were not enforced by any new *Law*, but left in possession of what force they had obtained by *Custom*. And even there he who complies not with these Ceremonies, offends against no *Law*, but only against

gainst *Custom*, which yet a Prudent Man will not lightly do; when once it has obtained in General.

12. This however ought not to encourage (much less will it authorize) any private Person, to introduce any *new Ceremony* into the Publick Worship, upon pretence that the *New* is as much enjoyned as the *Old* was, and that there is as good Reason for the *One*, as for the *Other*. For though no Custom that is younger than a Law, ought to prevail *against* that Law, yet where there is no Law, Custom supported by a general practice of wise and good Men, and not opposed by their Superiors, becomes a *sort of Rule*, and will not easily be transgressed by such as love Deency and Order. And therefore a *New Ceremony* does not stand upon the same Foot with an *Old* one, because it has not been generally well received, nor been confirmed by Custom and Usage; though perhaps

there may be as good Reason for the New as for the Old.

13. It was the Custom at the Beginning of Queen Elizabeth's Reign, for the People to *stand up* at the *Gloria Patri*, and when the *Te Deum Jubilate*, and the other *Hymns* were repeated ; and the Custom to *stand up* when the *Gospels* after the *Epistles*, were read on *Sundays* and *Holidays* ; and the Custom for the People to say, *Glory be to thee, O Lord.* The Church was in Possession, as it were, of these things, and made no *Rule* concerning them, but left them to be continued or disused, as it should happen, and so they continue to this Day.

14. But it was not then the Custom, nor has been since, for the People to *stand up*, whilst the *Psalms* were Singing in Parish Churches ; nor whilst the Second Lesson was reading, tho' it were out of one of the *Gospels*,

Gospels, either on Sundays, Holidays or Week-days, and yet if we should go to examine the Reason of Things, 'tis very likely the Singing Psalms would be found to be of greater Authority than the *Te Deum* it self, altho' it be the finest Hymn that was ever made by Man; and 'tis more than likely that the *Second Lesson* is as much *Gospel*, when read in the *first Service*, as when 'tis read in the *Second Service* after the *Epistle*. And I hope it will never come to be disputed whether the *Epistle* is not as much *the Word of God*, and *the Dictate of the Holy Ghost*, as is the *Gospel* which follows it. And certainly the *Lords Prayer* when read in the *Second Lesson* (as it is Six times in the Year) is as much the *Lords Prayer*, as when it is repeated both by the Minister and People in the *Daily Service*, when both are obliged by the *Rubric* to do it *on their Knees*, which yet they are not obliged to do, when they hear it read as part of the

Second Lesson: Which by the way, may help to correct that Disturbance, which is occasioned by ignorant Peoples getting up from their Seats and standing on their Feet, when that Heavenly Prayer comes to be read in a *Second Lesson*, which is neither enjoined by Authority, nor received by General Custom, and must therefore go for a *Private Fancy*, which ought to find no place in Publick Assemblies.

15. A *Parity of Reason* is not therefore sufficient to introduce new Ceremonies upon, without *Authority*, *Rule*, or *Custom*. People are much at their Liberty, in their *Family* or *Closet Devotions*, but must not innovate in *Congregations*. The Clergy ought not to lead the People into new Ways, nor should the People follow them, upon pretence of better Edification,

16. The first *General Council* that was ever held in the Christian World, and

and the most esteemed, was that of Nice, and that decreed in the xxth Canon, that all Christians, every where, should say their Prayers, *standing on their Feet* (and not *Kneeling*) every *Sunday* in the Year, and every *working Day* besides, betwixt *Easter-Day* and *Whitsunday*.

17. The Council Assigns no Reason for this, (as they need not) but they who lived then and a little after, tell us it was, that the Christians were thereby to shew, that they were *Risen with Christ*. Now certainly this Reason, considered in it self, will hold altogether as good, for *standing up* at Prayers, every *Day* in the Year, as on any *Week Day* betwixt *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*. But certainly, that Curate would have been held for an Audacious Perverse Creature, who should have exhorted his People, to *stand up* at their Prayers all the Days in the *Lent Season*, because there was

as much reason to do so, before *Easter Day*, as after it; and because the Council had not forbid the doing so, and because that *standing up* is a Posture of Respect and of Attention. Private Men have nothing to do, to assign Reasons for introducing Ceremonies, of which there is no need, and for doing which they have no Authority.

18. But what, if, after all, these Innovations of *standing up* at the reading the *Second Lessons* and at the *Singing Psalms*, be not sincerely intended, for greater Decencies sake, and shewing more Reverence, and exciting greater Devotion, but meerly to start up a *New Distinction*, and make a farther Difference betwixt those who come to the Publick Worship in the same Place, and at the same time, with one another, but who are of different Parties, with respect to the King and State Affairs? You know in what *Parish* you are, and

and what sort of People they are who chiefly promote these Innovations, and are most forward to distinguish themselves by little Ceremonious Observances ; and you also know what King it is they incline to.

19. The *Low-Church* People, as they are called, are content, when they come to Church, to comply with the Rules enjoined by their Lawful Governours, and to *stand* or *kneel* or *sit* as they are bid to do by Rule and Custom ; but 'tis very likely that they will Scruple to join in any *New Ceremony*, without Command of Authority, as well because they care not to be imposed upon by any *Private Fancy*, as because these *Innovators* are by no means acceptable to them.

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They will therefore do as they used to do, and so they will be marked and known for *Low-Church* People, which will have such Consequences at Church, as other Marks of Distinction have in other Places ; the Mischief of which has been enough, one would think, already, and needs no Augmentation.

My Advice is therefore, that you do not leave the Parish-Church, because of these *New-fangled Whimsies*; but resort thither, as timely and as constantly as you have hitherto done; and behave your self as well, as seriously and devoutly as you used to do; and have no manner of regard to what you see others do, as to the Ceremonial Part, if it be not appointed by the Rubrick, or approved by Custom, which you have hitherto been guided by in the Publick Wor-
ship.

ship. And that you may the better see how little Countenance or Encouragement is to be given, even by Private People, to any *Innovations* in the Church: I will shew you in a few Words, the Rise and Origine of one or two of the most corrupt Practices of the Church of *Rome*.

Some Hundreds of Years had past, before any *Picturē*, *Image* or *Statue* of a Saint, was Placed in any Christian Church, throughout the World; tho' it is not unlikely that there were both in other places for Ornament and Honour. It came at length into a *Painter's* Head, to represent, in as lively a manner as he could, the Sufferings of a *Martyr'd Saint*, to which the Church was dedicated, i. e. by whose Name it was called; and to hang this Piece in some conspicuous place within it. Wise Men were offended with the Novelty; not at the Picture, but at the setting

it up, in the *Church*; but the Common People were mightily pleased with it, and said that Pictures were the only Books which they could read; and found themselves much edified by seeing how the Saints had glorified God, and confirm'd the Faith by their Constancy in suffering and enduring Torments for the sake of Christ: And could such good Thoughts, and Noble Resolutions, be better raised in them than at *Church*, where they met so often to worship God? And therefore such good Pictures were most properly placed in Churches. There lived hard by a very devout *Statuary*, who excelled in carving Images both of Stone and Wood, who seeing the People so mightily taken with the Picture, asked them, one day, whether an *Image*, of their Patron-Saint, Carved out of fine Marble, and placed in a convenient Niche within the *Church*, would not excite the same good Thoughts,

Thoughts, and good Remembrances in their Minds, that the Picture did the Colours of which would, in time, fade much, and wear away; and hearing nothing to the contrary, he set it up, and was commended for his Zeal and Benefaction by them. And great gazing there was at it; none of them making any exception to an *Image*, which they could not make to a *Picture*; both seem'd alike Innocent; alike useful; and alike proper, to excite good Thoughts, and devout Affections in the Minds of such as look'd on them.

It was not long after, that a Man of Quality and great Wealth, ordered the Statuary to make the finest Image he could of *Christ* our Lord, and fix it on a *Cross*, with all the marks of Sorrow, and most painful Agonies that could be possibly expressed in such a Work, and place it in the *Eastern Light*, towards which

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he saw the People generally turn in their Acts of Worship. This was accordingly done, and the People were very fond of this *new Help to their Devotion*. Here was *the King of Saints* himself, they said ; here they were hourly put in mind of their Sins, which cost their Saviour all the bitter Pains he underwent upon the Cross, for their Redemption, which were so lively expressed in this good Image, that they could never view it well, without Compunction of Heart within, and knocking of their Breasts without, and other Tokens of Repentance. The Gentleman's Wife, and eldest Son, besought him, out of pure Devotion, that our Lord might not be worse attended in the *Church*, than he was upon *Mount Calvary*, and hereupon there was another Image made to represent his most afflicted *Mother*, and placed on his right Side ; and another on his left, namely his most beloved

beloved Disciple *John*, for so it was found to be in the Gospel ; and thus the Church was furnished with Books for the Laity to read and meditate upon ; and it was not long before they bowed their Heads ; Incensed them ; and Kneeled and said their Prayers before them. Under the Statue of the Patron Saint, was his Tomb of Black Marble, in which the precious Reliques of this holy Martyr were deposited, i. e. the Bones that were not Burnt to Ashes, together with some Ashes of his Body that had been consumed by Fire : At this Tomb the People chose to say their Prayers rather than in any other part of the Church, because they had heard that the Saint himself had Kneeled in the place where his Tomb stood, when he offered up his Life to God. This Tomb the People prayed at constantly for whatever they wanted at God's Hands. One prayed for a sick Child, and

and another for a dying Husband, and another for the Cure of a Disease, under which she had long laboured : And it so pleased God that their Prayers were heard and granted in their several Kinds ; and then it came into their Heads, that their Prayers were the *rather* heard for their being put up at the Tomb of this good Saint ; and that more People had been heard in what they asked, at this Tomb, than in any other place or part of the Church ; and when they reasoned among themselves how, or why this should be ? They were told, that God might intend thereby to glorify his Saints, and to shew how precious their Death was in his Sight : And there were some, who doubted not to affirm, that the Saint himself did certainly intercede with God, in their behalf ; For who (said they) can think that the Saints in Heavon should sit and do nothing ? And can

can they do any thing better and more befitting them, than pray for those who live on Earth, and want all manner of Comfort and Assistance? And can any Prayers be more acceptable to God, than such as the Church Triumphant puts up for their Fellow-members of the Church Militant? And can any Prayers be sooner heard, than what his Favorite Saints who died for the Truth, put up? And when it was made so clear, by these Deductions, that the Saints did undoubtedly intercede with God, for their Fellow Christians on the Earth, it was very easy for the People then to ask of God, that he would grant them their Requests, *at* and *for* the intercession, more especially of these Saints, his faithful Servants, whose Merits might prevail for what their own Unworthiness had made them neither dare to ask, nor fit to receive. And when these People had

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at any time, received at God's Hands, what they had asked through the Intercession of the Saints, it was very natural, for Ignorant unthinking Heads, to conclude, that God had truly granted what they had asked, for the sake of that Saint's Intercession, which yet is no Consequence at all, since God might grant it for his own Mercies sake, and through the Intercession of his ever Blessed Son; but this the People did not mind, the Saints Intercession was the Means they used last, and having found, as they thought, the Effects of it, they looked no farther. But things did not long stand here; the People were not content to pray to God, to grant them what they wanted, for the Merits sake, and at the Intercession of the Saints, but they prayed to those very Saints themselves, that they would intercede with God to grant them what they wanted.

This

This was a wide Step indeed, and a great Change. The passage from the one Practice to the other, was not easy, natural, or consequential ; But Superstition got over it quickly, and fancied there was but a little difference, betwixt Peoples praying to God to hear the Saints praying for them, and the praying to the Saints that they would pray to God for them ; whereas there is the widest difference in the World betwixt those two Prayers ; the one is directed to *God*, the sole proper Object, Omnipresent and Omnipotent ; the other to *Creatures* only present in one Place, and of themselves able to do nothing. But these were Scruples that never troubled those good People, they had a Faith that swallowed every thing, and seemed not to value Consequences at all. To the Tomb they came, and prayed the Saint to pray to God for whatever good Things

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they

they wanted; and when this Practice came to be contested a little, it was justified, as done out of *pure Humanity*, because they were unworthy to approach to God by Prayer, themselves in Person; and therefore did it by the Mediation of Saints their Intercessors. Well, in some reasonable time, instead of praying the Saint to pray to God to give them this or that, they came to praying the Saint directly and downright to bestow this or that Blessing on them *Himself*: They thought it was too much round about, to say, *O Apollonia, pray to God to Cure me of the Tooth-ach*, and they said directly, *O Apollonia, Cure me, I beseech thee, of the Tooth-ach*. But being hard put to it to defend this Practice, they said they meant no more but to intreat her to pray to God for them; and all the good Writers of that corrupt Church, who have any Sense

Sense or Virtue left, desire to have all the Prayers that are put up to the Saints, to be understood to mean no more than a bare *Ora pro nobis*, or, --- *Pray for us*; which is, indeed, impossible to be done, by People that can read and understand. But my Design was not to dispute about any Thing, but to shew how one practice draws on another, not near so Innocent as the first, till at length they come to Things ridiculous, absurd, and never to be justified. And therefore that a *Stand* is to be made *at first* against all manner of *Innovations* in the Publick Worship, that are not authorized by the Governours of the Church, who have the Power of ordering our Behaviour there, let them pretend to be never so *Reasonable*, so *Decent*, or *Convenient*. The *Curate* of the Parish is no more to judge what is *Reasonable*, *Decent*, or *Convenient*, in the Publick Wor-

ship, than the *Clark*, or any Layman of the Parish is ; and there is not a Layman in the Parish who has not as much Right to Oppose, as the Curate has to *Impose* any new Rite, Ceremony, or Posture, in the Publick Worship : And whenever he shews you *his* Commission so to do, I'll undertake to shew him *yours*, to withstand him. But you are afraid of being *singular*. Where is the Singularity of doing as you always used to do, and as the rest of the Congregation used to do, before these *new Lights* came amongst you ? Why is your Parish *Singular* in doing what the rest of the Parishes both in the City and the Suburbs *do not* ? But what is the Harm of standing up ? None at all. And what is the Harm of sitting as you used to do ? Why did the Curate make the People change that Posture ? There is indeed no Harm in either Posture, nor

nor any great Good ; but there is Harm in yielding to the *Imposing Spirit* of any Private Man, in the Publick Worship. And whosoever reads with any Observation, will find it was at first, the single Opinion or single Practice of some Private Man (and perhaps a very good Man too) that laid the Foundation of all the Superstitious Practices that prevail amongst the corrupt Part of Christians, now in the World. They were at first *Innocent* enough, and for a while they continued *Tolerable* ; but by degrees, and adding one thing to another, they came at last to the pass we now see them in ; and who can tell at what time the Impositions of private Fancies are to be withstood, if not at first ? And can any one tell where they will stop, if private Men may not withstand them ? Who can tell us, why this Curate should not, in time, exhort the Gentlemen

Gentlemen of *Holbourn*, to do as the Gentlemen of *Poland* do, i. e. draw out their Swords, when they repeat the Creed, to shew how ready they are to defend the Faith of Christ against all Opposers? This is a very significant Ceremony, and makes a fine Show; and I will undertake that he has as much Reason, and as much Authority, to exhort them to the one, as he has to tell them they must stand up, when the Psalms are Singing; since it is neither the Custom of other Churches, so to do, nor yet enjoined by Competent Authority.

Since you know me well, I need not tell you, that I have very little Concern either for this Posture, or against the other. I use them both as it happens, either for my Ease or Convenience; and I lay no Stress on either. But I am very Zealous against the Pride of Singularity, Private Fancies, and Innovations in Matters relating

ting to the Publick Worship of God; and I would have you so too; and the more so, because there is a bold, daring, Innovating Spirit, got of late Years among the young, unlearned, injudicious part of the Clergy, which if not timely repressed, and checked, will give disturbance both to the Church and State, and therefore I would have them receive no manner of Countenance, or Encouragement, from any ones Submission, Imitation, or Example.

Let us obey *God*, without Reserve; the *King*, according to Law; and our *Ecclesiastical Governours*, as far as we can with a good Conscience do. But when a Private Man shall bid us do, what neither *God*, nor the *King*, nor the *Bishop*, requires of us; it will be very Civil, if we only tell him he is *Impertinent*.

F I N I S.



A circular library stamp with the words "BIBLIOTHEQUE DE LA CITE" around the perimeter and the date "25 OCT 93" in the center.

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